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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

19 November 1957

Staff Memorandum #51-57

SUBJECT: Terms of Reference: NIE 62-58: THAILAND

1. An estimate on Thailand was placed on the tentative list of the current Estimates Program with a note to the effect that an estimate "on Thailand's future orientation and stability following the recent coup will probably be necessary within the next few months." The staff now proposes that this paper be scheduled for the second quarter 1958. In order to provide ample time for the levying of any necessary requirements on Embassy Bangkok and for research within OIRA, we suggest that the Board act on the attached Terms of Reference at an early, convenient date.

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(Note: NIE 62-57, "Probable Developments in Thailand", published 18 June 1957, is out of date as a result of the army coup of 16 September and subsequent developments. New national elections are now scheduled for December, 1957. The purpose of this estimate is to analyze the internal political situation in Thailand and, in light of the now situation, to reexamine the country's prospects for political stability and its probable international orientation over the next year or two.)

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the probable developments in Thailand over the next year or two.

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QUESTIONS

I. THE POLITICAL SITUATION

1. Analyze the present ruling group in terms of its prospects, strength and weakness. What is its role in the political situation? Is it a force for political stability or for political dissention? Who are its leading personalities? What is the position of Sarit? What cliques exist within the ruling group. Is it likely to split up? If so, why and what clique or individuals would probably emerge on top? What are the prevailing attitudes within the ruling group toward Sarit, Phibun, Phao, Pridi, the Monarchy, the "Royalists", the left-wing groups in Thailand? Has there been any change in the extent or nature of corruption in government since the new ruling group came into power?

2. What is the present role of such groups as the "Royalists", the intellectuals, and the civil service? What are their prospects as a political force? What is the role of the King in the internal political situation? Is the role of public opinion and the press becoming more important? If so, why and in what way?

3. What is the orientation, present role, and strength of the major political parties? Who are their leaders and what are their connections

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with the ruling group? What are the future prospects for these political parties and their leaders. Are political parties becoming more important in Thai politics?

4. What significant trends were revealed by the recent elections? Were they free and honest elections? If not, to what extent and in what way were they corrupt? What is the composition of Parliament (chart)? Is the Parliament playing, or likely to play, a more important role in Thai politics. If so, why and in what way?

5. What is the extent and nature of public support for the government? Has the new ruling group taken any action to meet the basic causes of public dissatisfaction with the government that were manifested during the February 1957 election campaign? If so, what and how effective are the measures? What are the prospects for stable government? What are the threats to the present ruling group's continued control of the government? If the present ruling group is ousted, what individuals or groups are likely to come to power?

6. What is the Communist situation? What has been the impact of the Communists and the left-wing on the political situation? What are the trends in strength, effectiveness, and influence of the Communists and the left-wing?

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7. What political and security problems are raised by racial minorities, especially the Overseas Chinese? By provincial interests? What are the government's policies toward these problems and the prospects for overcoming them?

II. THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

8. Have there been any significant shifts in Thailand's economic situation since the last estimate? If so, explain them in terms of cause and significance. To what extent are they a consequence of the recent political developments?

9. What is the attitude of the government and of the ruling group toward Thailand's economic problems? What is the economic outlook for Thailand? Is the economic situation likely to affect Thailand's political situation or its international orientation? If so, in what way?

III. SECURITY FORCES

10. What are the strengths, weaknesses, and capabilities of the armed forces, including the police, with respect to internal subversion or uprising? What respect to defense against external aggression?

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11. What role do the military and police forces play in the Thai political situation? How have the recent political developments affected the political roles of the military and police forces? Are there evidences of unrest or dissatisfaction with the government or the present ruling group within the security forces? If so, what are the likely consequences?

IV. INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION

12. What is Thailand's general international orientation and the principal factors determining it? To what extent and in what way is it changed or likely to be changed by the new government and ruling group? What trends in Thailand's international orientation are likely over the next year or two?

13. What are the trends in opinion among government leaders and the public concerning neutralism, Communism, SEATO, and Communist China?

14. Have there been any significant changes since the last estimate in the Thai government's relations with the Sino-Soviet Bloc? The countries of non-Communist Asia? What changes have taken place, and why? What are the likely developments in these relations over the next year or two? What are Thai reactions to recent developments in Laos, Cambodia, and Burma?

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15. What is the status of Thai-US relations? What are the Thai complaints or sources of dissatisfaction with the present relationship? Does the present ruling group, or important members of it, have any special dissatisfaction with the US or its policies? What changes are likely in Thai-US relations over the next year or two and what are their probable causes? What would be the probable effect if the US recognized Communist China or acquiesced in its admission to the UN?

V. POST MORTEM

1. What major intelligence deficiencies exist in our coverage of Thailand?

VI. VALIDITY STUDY

1. Assess the conclusions and major sections of NIE 62-57 for validity? In those instances where the estimated erred, what was the cause?

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